DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 119 784 JC 760 177

AUTHOR Hayes, Pernell Howell
TITLE A Study to Determine Current Practices in the Administration, Organization and Teaching of Business Communication and Related Courses in Public Two-Year Colleges and Technical Institutions in the United States.
PUB DATE [74]
NOTE 15p.; Summary of Ed.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Business Communication; *Business Education Teachers; Business English; Community Colleges; *Course Content; Educational Trends; *Junior Colleges; *National Surveys; Teacher Characteristics; Teaching Methods; Technical Institutes

ABSTRACT

In order to develop guidelines for planning, administering, and teaching business communication courses, a questionnaire was distributed to 410 public two-year colleges and technical institutions which had indicated an interest in participating in a study of such courses. In all, 273 institutions provided information on 340 business communication courses taught by 404 instructors. All geographic regions of the United States were included in the survey population. Fifty percent of the participating institutions had introduced business communication courses within the past 10 years. In the fall of 1973, there were 6,253 students enrolled in business communication courses in 217 of the institutions reporting. Enrollments in business communication courses have increased in the last 5 years at 90 percent of the institutions. The normal procedure for conducting classes seems to be a combination of lectures and discussions, supplemented by laboratory-workshops. More time is spent on business letters and memoranda, and less time on report writing and oral communication. Textbooks, workbooks, course outlines, and other teaching aids were used with varying degrees of flexibility in the courses reporting. A profile of the typical business communication teacher is provided, and recommendations for further study are made. (Author/NHM)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED119784

A STUDY TO DETERMINE CURRENT PRACTICES IN THE ADMINISTRATION, ORGANIZATION AND TEACHING OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION AND RELATED COURSES IN PUBLIC TWO-YEAR COLLEGES AND TECHNICAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

Pernell Howell Hayes

Under the Supervision of Professor Russell J. Hosler
University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin

Statement of the Problem

The public two-year colleges and technical institutions in the United States have experienced phenomenal growth during the last decade and have assumed as an important goal the preparation of students for business. This growing emphasis on preparation for business being undertaken by two-year institutions is accompanied by a tremendous growth in courses in business communication; therefore, it becomes timely to investigate the status of business communication in these institutions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current practices in the organization, administration, and teaching of courses in business communication in public two-year colleges and technical institutions in the United States.

In undertaking this study, the assumption was made that the further development and improvement of courses in business communication should be guided by principles based upon a thorough knowledge of the present status of business communication in the two-year colleges

JC 760 177

and technical institutions. The investigation was designed, therefore, to bring together the results of an investigation to describe and review current practices that will lay the foundation for the development of guidelines for educators charged with the responsibility of the planning, the administering, as well as the teaching of business communication courses.

Need for the Study

The impetus for this study has been the rapid growth of the importance of business communication and the concommitant need for the teaching of courses in business communication. The public two-year colleges and technical institutions were chosen because of the phenomenal growth of these institutions within the last decade and the growing emphasis on preparation of students for business presently undertaken as a goal of these institutions.

Procedures of the Study

The first steps that were followed in the procedures of this study were: a review of related research and literature, an examination of textbooks, course outlines, and supplementary materials, and an examination of catalogs of two-year colleges and technical institutions in order to secure a description of business communication courses. The primary activity of the study involved the designing and the development and distribution of a questionnaire instrument in order to gather and analyze the following basic data for the investigation:

Part A: Institutional Data and the Administration and Organization of Business Communication and Related Courses in Participating Institutions.

Part B: The Content and Current Practices in the Teaching of Business Communication and Related Courses.

Part C: Background Information on Persons Currently Teaching Business Communication Courses.

A letter seeking participation in the study was mailed to 1,070 public two-year colleges and technical institutions in the United States. A three-part questionnaire was then sent to the 410 respondents who agreed to participate, with the instructions for the administrator and/or chairman to complete Part A and distribute Parts B and C to the appropriate persons.* Data were received and tabulated by computer.

Population and Delimitations

There were 273 institutions providing information on 340 business communication courses taught by 404 instructors. Among these 273 public two-year institutions, there were 144 (52.7 percent) community colleges, 54 (19.8 percent) technical institutions, 48 (17.6 percent) junior colleges, and 27 (9.9 percent) combinations of two-year institutions. All geographic regions of the United States were included in the survey.

Findings of the Study

Institutional Data

1. The founding dates which were provided by 264 of the 273 public two-year colleges and technical institutions participating in this study indicated that 18 (6.8 percent) were founded between 1900

---

* As indicated in Chapter 3, these instruments are exhibited in the Appendix of this study.

and 1920; 76 (28.5 percent) were founded between 1921 and 1960; and 170 (64.7 percent) were founded between the years 1961-1972.

2. Eleven percent of the participating institutions had student enrollments of 250 or less; ten percent had student enrollments of 251-500; twenty-five percent had student enrollments of 501-1000; and fifty-four percent had student enrollments of over 1,000.

3. Between 1961 and 1970, sixty-five percent of the participating institutions had introduced business programs. During the fall of 1973, there were 122,178 full-time students and 67,105 part-time students enrolled in business programs at 237 of the 273 participating institutions reporting enrollments; 3,046 full-time and 3,212 part-time instructors were reported as teaching in these business programs.

4. Fifty percent of the participating institutions had introduced the business communication courses within the past ten years. In the fall of 1973, there were 6,253 students enrolled in business communication in the 217 of the 273 institutions which reported these enrollments. There were 256 participating institutions which reported that 577 instructors taught business communication courses at various times during the year.

5. Seventy-five percent of the participating institutions had 1-3 sections of business communication courses; seventeen percent had above 10 sections of business communication.

6. Over fifty percent of the participating institutions reported more than 51 students enrolled in each section of their business communication courses; only 36 (16.6 percent) had between 1-20 students enrolled in each section of the business communication courses.

7. Only one course in business communication was offered in fifty-eight percent of the institutions; two courses in business communication were offered in fourteen percent of the institutions; three courses were offered in three percent of the institutions; and more than three courses in business communication were offered in twenty-five percent of the participating institutions.

8. A little less than twenty-five percent of the participating institutions offered business report writing as a separate business communication course; a little less than forty-five percent offered report writing as part of other business communication courses.

9. Enrollments in business communication courses have increased in the last five years at ninety percent of the participating institutions; however, about ten percent reported a decrease in enrollments in the business communication courses.

Business Communication Course Content and Teaching Procedures

1. Fifty-three textbook titles were reported as being used for the 340 business communication courses in this study; however, no particular textbook was used by a large majority of the respondents. The one textbook that was used more than any other was Practical Business Correspondence for Colleges, by Robertson and Walker, which was reported as being used by 27 of the participants.

About fifty percent of the participants followed textbooks closely or very closely in their business communication courses; the other fifty percent followed textbooks with some or considerable deviation.

2. Almost ninety percent of the business communication courses included letter writing, and seventy-five percent of the courses included memoranda writing.

3. A little over sixty percent of the business communication courses emphasized the importance of report writing in business, and over fifty percent of the courses included some writing of reports. About forty percent of the respondents devoted 1-10 percent of the business communication courses to business report writing, while other respondents devoted various percentages of time to this topic. Only nine participants indicated that no time was spent on any aspect of business report writing in the business communication courses.

4. Non-writing communication (oral presentations, listening, communication theory) was included in over one-half of the business communication courses reported. Among these business communication courses in which non-written communication was included, 1-10 percent of the time was devoted to oral communication in fifty-seven percent of the courses; 11-30 percent of the time was devoted to oral communication in twenty-nine percent of the courses; over 30 percent of the time was devoted to oral communication in about nine percent of the courses. No time was devoted to oral communication in about five percent of the business communication courses in this study.

5. Combination lecture and discussion was the classroom approach reported by over ninety percent of the participants; laboratory-type approach was also reported by about seventy-five percent of the teachers of business communication courses.

Over fifty percent of the participants reported that they require all homework to be typewritten.

6. In an open-ended and optional section near the end of the questionnaire in which instructors were given the opportunity to list problems in teaching business communication courses, eighty-four percent listed problems encountered to include: (1) poor English background and/or poor writing skills of students; (2) varying levels and abilities of students; (3) finding time to cover materials; (4) lack of effective teaching aids and materials; (5) grading of assignments; (6) motivation of students; (7) typing skills of students; (8) other general problems.

Training and Experience of Participating Business Communication Teachers

1. Among the 404 business communication teachers participating in this study, seventy percent were females and thirty percent were males. There were 363 full-time teachers with twenty-nine percent male and seventy-one percent female. Only 36 of the teachers were teaching part time with about sixty percent females and forty percent males in this part-time group. Five teachers did not report their sex and/or full- or part-time status.

2. About sixty-five percent of the participating teachers held the masters degree as their highest degree earned; twenty percent had attained the bachelor's degree as their highest degree; about three percent held earned doctoral degrees; and the remaining percentages indicated that they held "other" degrees as their highest degrees

earned which were determined to be certifications in education beyond the bachelors and education specialists.

3. Business education was the undergraduate major of almost fifty percent of the participating teachers of business communication; thirteen percent had English and eleven percent had business administration as undergraduate majors. Remaining smaller percentages had majors in education, social science, accounting, marketing, speech, journalism, engineering, and other areas.

4. Among the highest degrees held by participants, business education was the major of the highest percentages for the bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees as well as for "other" certifications.

5. One hundred of the participating teachers were working toward second bachelors or more advanced degrees. Twenty-three were seeking second bachelors in business administration; 16 were seeking masters degrees in accounting; two were seeking doctoral degrees in journalism. Smaller numbers were working towards various degrees in English, education, engineering, business education, and "other" fields.

6. There were 271 (67.1 percent) of the 404 teachers who had taught previously at the secondary level. Eight percent of the teachers had previously taught at the elementary level; the remaining percentages had taught at the university and other levels, in addition to their present post-secondary teaching assignments.

7. One to five years (with a mean of 2.9 years) of teaching experience in business communication courses were reported by 68 percent of the respondents; 22 percent had 6-10 years (with a mean of 7.6 years) of experience in teaching business communication courses;

7 percent had 11-15 years (with a mean of 12.7 years) of experience in business communication courses; two percent had 16-20 years (with a mean of 18.4 years) and a little less than two percent had above 20 years (with a mean of 24.2 years) experience in teaching business communication courses.

8. Over sixty percent of the respondents have been teaching at their present schools for only 1-5 years (with a mean of 3.2 years); a little less than thirty percent had been teaching business communication at their present schools 6-10 years (with a mean of 7.1 years); seven percent had been teaching business communication at their present schools 11-15 years (with a mean of 12.9 years); a little less than two percent had been teaching 16-20 years (with a mean of 18.2 years); and two percent had been teaching for over 20 years (with a mean of 25.9 years) in business communication courses in their present schools.

9. The results of this study indicated that 199 (51.8 percent) of the persons currently teaching business communication in participating institutions were teaching only one section of the course; 26.6 percent were teaching two sections, and 12.5 percent were teaching three sections. Remaining smaller percentages were teaching four to six sections of the course.

10. Fifty percent of the participating teachers had teaching loads involving 26-50 percent business communication, and thirty-eight percent spent up to 1-25 percent of their teaching load in business communication. The remaining smaller percentages were teaching business communication half or full-time.

Conclusions

The following conclusions have been drawn from the findings in this study:

1. No extensive surveys of business communication in two-year colleges and technical institutions in the United States are available in the literature; consequently, no comparison with other studies can be made at this time.

2. Due to the phenomenal growth in recent years of the public two-year colleges and technical institutions in the United States and the corresponding increase in the number of courses in business communication, as this study shows, it is evident that the two-year institutions--and business communication offerings within these colleges--represent a significant impact on preparation for positions in business.

3. Although textbooks, workbooks, and course outlines had a prominent place in the business communication courses reported in this study, these teaching aids were used with varying degrees of flexibility by participants. It can be concluded that despite the fact that 53 different textbooks were used in the 340 courses, no one textbook was outstandingly popular among the respondents.

4. This study did show that more time is spent on business letters and memoranda with less percentages of time spent on report writing and oral communication. However, many respondents pointed out in the optional comment section of the questionnaire that more time should be

spent in these courses on fundamentals of grammar and writing principles for the many students who need these skills.

5. It appears to be normal procedure to use a combination of lectures and discussions, supplemented by laboratory-workshops, to present business communication subject matter.

6. It appears that the typical business communication teacher in the public two-year colleges and technical institutions is a female, is teaching full-time, and has earned a masters in business education as her highest degree.

7. Since twenty-five percent of the business communication teachers in this study are seeking advanced degrees in fields other than what may be considered communication areas, it may be concluded that these teachers are either looking for job opportunities in such areas as business administration (including accounting), or they are seeing the need for improving their backgrounds in other areas in order to enhance their preparation to teach business communication courses.

8. The large majority of teachers presently teaching business communication courses in the participating institutions have come from secondary teaching to their present positions.

9. A high percentage of the instructors involved in this study had occupational experience (outside of teaching). In view of the emphasis placed on occupational experience by many for the persons involved in teaching business subjects, this figure would suggest that the teachers in this study would rate high in respect to this factor.

10. The fact that the majority of the business communication teachers in this study have been teaching business communication for only 1-5 years (with a mean of 2.9 years) and have been at their present schools for only 1-5 years (with a mean of 3.2 years) indicates that relatively inexperienced teachers are teaching business communication. These limited years of experience in teaching business communication and the limited time in present positions may indicate an unstable situation in business communication teaching. The findings may also suggest that the beginning teacher in the two-year post-secondary school is frequently assigned to teach business communication, which may be a stepchild in the "totem pole" of curricular offerings.

Recommendations

1. From the comments offered by the respondents in this survey relating to students entering post-secondary education with a lack of knowledge of fundamentals of grammar and principles of writing, it is obvious that the post-secondary institutions should develop methods of accurately determining remedial needs of their students in written and oral communication and develop ways to meet these needs.

2. Because of the tremendous growth of the public two-year colleges and technical institutions and the increase in the number of courses in business communication in these institutions, it is recommended that these courses be continuously evaluated to determine if they are meeting the needs of students and the needs of business.

3. Research is needed in many areas of business communication; however, the following are the most obvious recommendations for research drawn from the findings and conclusions of this study:

a. Research should be conducted to determine if the objectives and content of business communication courses are based on the actual needs of students to prepare them for business, industry, government, and private life. A study should be conducted on the two-year level similar to the study conducted by Richard Hansen (21:1970) in which he sought to ". . .determine the degree of agreement between businessmen and college teachers of communication courses on statements concerning objectives of communication preparation for business students."

b. Research should be completed to analyze what actually goes on in the classroom. Studies should be conducted by observations in the classroom to discover actual teaching procedures and student behavior in order to determine those methods that secure more favorable results.

c. Research should be conducted to determine appropriate textbooks and effective teaching materials to develop improved teaching aids for courses in business communication in two-year colleges and technical institutions.

d. Extensive follow-up studies of graduates of two-year institutions who took business communication courses should be conducted to determine to what extent business communication courses are serving the needs of students and of business.

e. Further investigation is necessary to determine a sound, workable program of undergraduate and graduate study for the persons

planning to teach business communication. Determination should be made of what courses and what types of work experience are needed to better prepare these teachers.

f. Research should be completed to determine if business education curricula adequately prepares teachers of business communication, since it is the business education curriculum from which most business communication teachers may continue to come.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

APR 16 1976

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES